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TWENTY-FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1116 (1997) of 27 June 1997, in which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 30 September 1997, in the expectation that it would terminate on that date. In that resolution, the Council also requested me to keep it informed on a regular basis on the situation in Liberia and, in particular, developments in the electoral process, and to submit a report by 29 August 1997.

2. The present report describes the preparations for and conduct of the 19 July Liberian elections and the progress of the withdrawal of UNOMIL, as well as the initial views of the new Government concerning a post-UNOMIL presence of the United Nations in Liberia.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

3. The Liberian peace process came to a successful conclusion during the reporting period with the holding of presidential and legislative elections on 19 July 1997, as scheduled, and the installation of the new Government on 2 August 1997. The electoral process and the installation of a democratically elected Government constituted the last item on the revised schedule of implementation of the Abuja Agreement (S/1995/742, annex) under the peace plan for Liberia of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

4. As described in section IV below, the entire electoral process was organized and conducted by the Liberian Independent Elections Commission in an impartial and transparent manner, with the assistance of UNOMIL, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the European Union (EU) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, which, in a coordinated effort, pooled their logistical, communications and transport resources as well as their technical expertise to support the process. States members of ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), donor

countries and the Liberian Council of State provided generous financial, material and technical assistance.

5. The Joint Electoral Coordination Mechanism of ECOWAS and the United Nations, which was established during the reporting period, greatly assisted in the harmonization of electoral preparations. The Joint Mechanism held regular meetings with the Independent Elections Commission and key operational actors in order to keep the electoral process on track and to ensure that operational requirements were met. OAU delegations that visited Liberia during the reporting period worked closely with the Joint Mechanism. The United Nations and ECOWAS jointly certified the voter registration and the election results through the Joint Mechanism.

6. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, as well as the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, representing the ECOWAS Committee of Nine on Liberia, visited Liberia during the final week of the electoral preparations to ascertain the status of the arrangements for polling day. The Ministers remained in the country throughout the elections and my Special Representative also maintained close contacts with them. He also consulted closely with former President Jimmy Carter as well as the OAU and EU delegations during the election period.

7. A total of 13 political parties fielded candidates for the presidential and legislative elections. The parties started their electoral campaigning on 16 June 1997 as scheduled under the electoral calendar. The campaign was conducted without major incidents of violence or intimidation, and the Liberian people were able freely to associate themselves with political parties of their choice. The Independent Elections Commission, having investigated the few incidents reported to it, determined that there was no evidence to suggest organized or widespread acts of violence or intimidation.

8. The final result of the election was announced on 24 July, giving the National Patriotic Party (NPP) 75.3 per cent, the Unity Party (UP) 9.5 per cent and the All Liberia Coalition Party (ALCOP) 4 per cent of the national vote. The Alliance and United People's Party (UPP) each received approximately 2.5 per cent, while the remaining eight parties received less than 2 per cent of the vote each. Voter turnout for the election was approximately 85 per cent of registered voters.

9. Mr. Charles Ghankay Taylor was elected President, and his National Patriotic Party won 21 of the 26 Senate seats, and 49 of the 64 seats in the House of Representatives. UP leads the opposition with three and seven seats in each chamber respectively. ALCOP entered, and subsequently withdrew, a formal complaint about irregularities in the conduct of elections in three counties and the allocation of seats, the modalities of which had previously been agreed upon by all the political parties and which were provided for in the electoral law. To date ALCOP and UPP have not filled their seats in the legislature and continue to dispute the method of allocation of seats.

10. On 2 August 1997, Mr. Taylor was inaugurated as President of Liberia, and Mr. Enoch Dogolea as Vice-President. In his inaugural address, the President emphasized reconciliation, the protection of human rights, national unity and

the urgent need for the reconstruction of Liberia's shattered economy, infrastructure and institutions. The President paid tribute to the role played by ECOWAS and ECOMOG in bringing peace to Liberia and to the contribution made by the United Nations and the wider international community.

11. The inauguration ceremonies were witnessed by the current Chairman of ECOWAS and Head of State of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha, and by the Heads of State of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Niger, as well as the Prime Ministers of Benin and Togo, the Vice President of Gambia and the Chairman of the Council of State of Ghana. The Heads of State of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, South Africa, the United States of America and Zimbabwe were represented by special envoys. Delegations were also sent from OAU and EU, and representatives from other Member States were present. In addition to my Special Representative, the United Nations was also represented by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, who travelled to Monrovia as my Special Envoy.

12. UNOMIL has now begun withdrawing its personnel from Liberia. The bridging activities designed as an interim measure to absorb demobilized combatants have been transferred from the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office to the relevant agencies and are now being dovetailed into the reintegration programme. My Special Representative is expected to depart on 30 September 1997, at the end of the Mission's mandate.

13. On 3 August, my Special Envoy and my Special Representative for Liberia were received by President Taylor. The President again emphasized the importance of encouraging reconciliation, protecting human rights, establishing a broad-based and inclusive Government and undertaking the task of national reconstruction. President Taylor requested the assistance of the United Nations in mobilizing international support for the reconstruction of his country. He expressed his desire for a continued United Nations presence following the termination of the UNOMIL mandate on 30 September. Further consultations will be conducted with the Government on the details and modalities for establishing such a presence, and I expect to be in a position to report back to the Council with concrete recommendations prior to the termination of the UNOMIL mandate.

III. MILITARY ASPECTS

14. Relative peace and stability have continued to prevail throughout Liberia since the issuance of my previous report dated 19 June 1997 (S/1997/478). The electoral campaigns of the political parties and the polling process were conducted in a secure environment guaranteed by ECOMOG.

15. The situation in Sierra Leone remains a potential threat to Liberia's stability. Outbreaks of heavy fighting on 6 and 10 July 1997 in south-eastern Sierra Leone, just across the border from the Liberian town of Bo Waterside, caused an influx of a large number of refugees into Liberia. The refugees included about 200 Kamajor militiamen, who were disarmed by ECOMOG. The fighting also resulted in casualties among Liberian civilians, who were evacuated by UNOMIL to hospitals in Monrovia. During the fighting, the UNOMIL field station at Bo was relocated to Sinje.

16. There has been no increase in the cumulative total of arms and ammunition recovered and verified by UNOMIL from the totals mentioned in my previous report. However, ECOMOG has reported that its cordon-and-search operations have led to the recovery of approximately 3,750 additional assorted weapons and 152,500 pieces of ammunition since the end of the official disarmament exercise in February. UNOMIL is currently discussing with the new Government and ECOMOG the issue of the custody of the weapons collected during the official disarmament exercise.

17. UNOMIL has now closed its field stations and has begun to repatriate the military observers. As at 15 August, 59 of the 93 military observers had been repatriated (see annex). The repatriation process is expected to be completed by 19 August.

IV. ELECTORAL PROCESS

Overview of the electoral process

18. On 24 July, following the official announcement of the results of the elections, I wrote to the President of the Security Council providing a description and overall assessment of the electoral process (S/1997/581). I recalled the publication of the United Nations recommendations on a framework for the holding of elections in Liberia on 10 February 1997; the establishment of the Independent Elections Commission on 2 April; and the adoption of a special elections law by the ECOWAS leaders at an extraordinary summit meeting held at Abuja, Nigeria, on 21 May 1997, following consultations with the Liberian political parties.

19. In the same letter, I also noted that, despite initial difficulties, the Independent Elections Commission had succeeded in registering more than 750,000 voters and that the large number of registration sites and their wide distribution throughout the country had afforded Liberians a fair and adequate opportunity to register themselves for the elections. I further noted that a vigorous campaign had been conducted by the political parties in a generally civil and peaceful atmosphere and that political parties had been free to travel and open offices in all parts of the country.

20. I also related the activities and findings of the 317 medium-term and short-term electoral observers UNOMIL had deployed throughout the 13 counties of Liberia. Although the Independent Elections Commission had originally envisaged establishing 1,864 polling stations, it eventually opened a total of 1,761 stations, of which UNOMIL observers visited 1,570. Both short-term and medium-term electoral observers have now been withdrawn and repatriated.

21. With respect to the conduct of the polling, I noted that voter turnout had been high, that no serious incidents had been reported and that it had been the assessment of UNOMIL observers that all eligible Liberians had been afforded a fair opportunity to vote for the political party of their choice. I reported to the Council that counting had taken place at polling stations immediately after the close of voting, and that that had been done with full transparency in the presence of party agents and national and international observers.

22. The tabulation of results, which was conducted by the Independent Elections Commission in Monrovia, had likewise been carried out in the presence of party agents and national and international observers, and the results announced were in accordance with the votes cast. I further informed the Council in my letter of 24 July that, earlier that day, I had issued a statement jointly with the Chairman of ECOWAS certifying that the electoral process had been credible and transparent, and certifying the elections as having been free and fair.

United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia and other assistance to the Independent Elections Commission

23. While the organization and conduct of the electoral process were the responsibility of the Independent Elections Commission, the Commission received considerable technical, logistical and organizational assistance from ECOWAS and ECOMOG, the United Nations, EU, the United States and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. UNOMIL observed and verified all stages of the electoral process and provided logistical support to the Commission from its inception until the final tabulation of votes. UNOMIL staff in the field were called upon to assist the Commission to a greater extent than initially envisaged, as the Commission's county magistrates and coordinators relied upon UNOMIL for transport and communications equipment, as well as technical advice and assistance.

24. UNOMIL, the European Commission, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and ECOMOG also worked in concert to assist the Independent Elections Commission with the deployment of polling materials. The Commission's preparations for polling day benefited greatly from the assistance provided and from the experience gained during the registration process, and were markedly more effective. The polling staff had remained in the field from the registration period, while polling materials were brought into the country in advance of polling day, and deployed successfully in time to begin polling on the morning of 19 July. UNOMIL also assisted the Commission with its International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) communications to and from the field.

25. UNOMIL employed the services of an expert to conduct the "quick count" to which I referred in my previous report (S/1997/478, para. 21), and which has proved useful in similar circumstances in helping to defuse tensions immediately following the election. The quick count was calculated on the basis of a random sample of polling stations and was notified to my Special Representative within six hours of the closing of the polls. My Special Representative shared the results of the quick count with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Chief Tom Ikimi, in his capacity as Special Envoy of the Chairman of ECOWAS, and with former President Jimmy Carter. The results were consistent with the final official results announced by the Independent Elections Commission four days later.

Public information support for the electoral process

26. Through its Public Information Unit, UNOMIL undertook civic and voter education activities in support of the registration and voting process. UNOMIL-originated radio programming aired four times weekly on each of eight

functioning radio stations. The programmes were simulcast where stations had both frequency modulation (FM) and short wave (SW) transmission facilities. In addition to interviews and electoral updates, the programmes featured short dramatizations of electoral scenarios using an all-Liberian cast and characters derived from a cartoon series commissioned by UNOMIL.

27. The cartoon series played a central role in the Public Information Unit's voter education activities and was widely distributed. According to reports from many electoral observers, the cartoon messages, on such issues as the secrecy of the vote, proportional representation and voter registration, were often the only voter education materials seen in circulation.

28. Leaflets explaining proportional representation and voter registration were also published, as well as statements by my Special Representative on the importance of registering and voting. A message from UNOMIL appeared in the newspapers on the eve of the election reminding Liberians of their civic duty to vote and urging a spirit of tolerance and respect for opposing points of view. The Public Information Unit published newsletters highlighting different aspects of the electoral process, including the logistical arrangements that went into the registration process. Other articles focused on community-level contributions by UNOMIL military observers and the Mission's human rights mandate.

29. The Public Information Unit and electoral observers in the field also collaborated with UNDP and the non-governmental organization Search for Common Ground in distributing some 5,500 non-battery FM/SW radios throughout the country in order to increase awareness of the electoral process.

Certification

30. As was clearly shown by reports from the UNOMIL observers and those of other international organizations and non-governmental organizations, the 1997 Liberian elections met international standards for democratic elections. The Chairman of ECOWAS and I jointly issued a statement on 24 July (see S/1997/581, annex) certifying the 1997 elections as reflecting the will of the Liberian voters, and the process as a whole as free, fair and credible. We congratulated the Liberian people for demonstrating their commitment to peace and their desire for the establishment of a democratically elected Government.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

31. During the period under review, UNOMIL conducted a series of assessment missions to monitor the human rights situation in the countryside. No major human rights violations committed by Liberians were confirmed during these missions.

32. In pursuance of its capacity-building mandate and in the run-up to the elections, UNOMIL collaborated with the Carter Center to provide a one-week training programme, from 18 to 25 June, for the Liberia Human Rights Centre and representatives of other Liberian human rights organizations. Sixty representatives of 12 organizations received certificates of participation at

the end of the exercise. The Liberia Human Rights Centre and other national organizations actively participated in observing and monitoring all aspects of the elections and have reported their general satisfaction with the conduct of the exercise.

33. In my previous report, I referred to an investigation conducted by UNOMIL into allegations that ECOMOG soldiers were responsible for the death of an individual killed during a cordon-and-search operation at Lajoy gold mine in Grand Cape Mount County on 10 May 1997. While persons claiming to have witnessed the incident have testified to the existence of a burial site, the absence of a forensic pathologist in the country rendered exhumation and further investigation impossible. Reports were also received from persons claiming to have witnessed an incident on 18 May 1997, in which ECOMOG soldiers allegedly beat a man to death in Bong County while interrogating him about allegations that he possessed a hunting weapon. In this case too, further verification was impossible in the absence of a pathologist.

34. I also indicated in my previous report that I would consult with the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Commission for Human Rights that the United Nations Centre for Human Rights of the Secretariat should provide advisory services and technical assistance to the new Government of Liberia to assist it in reviving the country's human rights structures. I am encouraged by President Taylor's commitment to the establishment of a national human rights commission, and by the repeated emphasis he has placed on the protection of human rights, both in his public statements and in his private discussions with my Special Envoy and Special Representative. I welcome this positive approach and look forward to discussing with the new Government at the earliest possible opportunity how the United Nations can best assist Liberia in fulfilling these goals.

VI. HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS

35. Emergency needs in Liberia are likely to continue to be great for the remainder of the year. At the same time, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and major donors are reorienting their activities better to address longer-term rehabilitation requirements in agriculture, education, health and infrastructure.

36. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has updated its operational plan for the repatriation and reintegration of Liberian refugees. The expected increase in stability following the elections is likely to prompt greater numbers of refugees to return, and UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation.

37. There are an estimated 130,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia. UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) provide care and maintenance for an estimated 30,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Montserrado County (Monrovia) and about 10,000 in Grand Cape Mount County. As a result of the situation in Sierra Leone, UNHCR has now halted all assistance to voluntary repatriation to that country.

38. All funds earmarked for the bridging operations of the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office, $3.3 million from the assessed budget and $500,000 from the Government of the United States, have been committed. The Office supported 50 projects, in which an estimated 10,000 fighters and civilians are engaged. Other bridging activities were undertaken by the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNDP and EU. As planned, the responsibility of administering and monitoring the Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office projects to completion was transferred to UNDP/United Nations Office for Project Services in July. Projects that are being implemented by United Nations agencies will be monitored and administered by the agencies themselves.

39. Despite several initial problems emanating from a lack of funds or delays in providing funds, together with coordination difficulties, the bridging programme has played a crucial role in the peace process of Liberia by employing approximately 15,000 ex-fighters including those mentioned in paragraph 38 above. This has kept them away from activities that could have undermined security during the electoral process. Bridging projects have also assisted in the restoration of essential services, such as schools, clinics, agriculture and public works, to many localities and in the rehabilitation of several rural roads and bridges.

VII. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

40. Since the end of the disarmament exercise in February 1997, United Nations agencies have been major partners in the consolidation of peace and preparations for the return to normality in Liberia. Their activities are now focusing on two main areas: the resettlement and reintegration of the population and the preparation of a rehabilitation and reconstruction plan.

41. The United Nations, through its Secretariat and specialized agencies and programmes, including UNDP, the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the International Labour Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, is working closely with ministries of the Liberian Government on a number of projects designed to restore government functions and create jobs. Furthermore, given their paramount importance in the recovery of the country, the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare and Education are being provided with additional resources to complete an assessment of the rehabilitation needs for their respective sectors.

VIII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

42. In its resolution 51/3 C of 13 June 1997, the General Assembly appropriated an amount of $20,447,100 gross to be assessed at a monthly rate of $1,703,925 gross ($1,576,525 net) for the maintenance of UNOMIL for the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998, subject to the extension of the mandate of UNOMIL by the Security Council. Based on Security Council resolution 1116 (1997), assessments on Member States have been made until 30 September 1997. Upon the expiration of the mandate of UNOMIL, the resource requirements for its liquidation and administrative closing will be presented to the Assembly.

43. As at 30 June 1997, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIL special account since the inception of the Mission amounted to some $16.1 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at 30 June 1997 was $1,673.0 million.

44. Since my previous report, the Government of Japan has made a further contribution of $509,000 to the Trust Fund for the Implementation of the Cotonou Agreement in Liberia, earmarked for election-related activities. The Government of Switzerland has also donated 50,000 Swiss francs for civic education activities.

IX. OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

45. With the establishment of a democratically elected Government in Liberia, the principal objective of UNOMIL has now been achieved. I congratulate ECOWAS and ECOMOG, which played a leading role in bringing peace to Liberia through a successful partnership with the United Nations. I also wish to express my appreciation to all Member States that have contributed to the process, whether bilaterally or through the Trust Fund. Above all, however, the credit goes to the Liberian people, who, through the electoral process, demonstrated their commitment to peace and their desire for the establishment of a democratically elected Government in their country.

46. In keeping with Security Council resolution 1116 (1997), the mandate of UNOMIL will expire on 30 September. The withdrawal of UNOMIL personnel is already under way and should be substantially completed by that date, leaving a small team to complete the usual liquidation and closing process. Pending further consultations with the Government of Liberia, it would be my intention to recommend the establishment of a peace-building support office to succeed UNOMIL after 30 September. I am convinced that such a presence could greatly assist the new Government in its efforts for reconciliation and reconstruction and contribute to promoting peace and stability in the region. Following consultations with the Liberian Government, and taking into account the views of a number of ECOWAS Governments, I intend to submit a further report to the Security Council shortly, before the end of the UNOMIL mandate, with proposals for the structure, staffing and functions of a United Nations presence in Liberia after UNOMIL.

47. In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, as well as to the Chief Military Observer, Major-General Sikandar Shami, and to all the civilian and military personnel of UNOMIL, past and present, for the important contribution they made, in close cooperation with ECOWAS and ECOMOG, to the cause of peace and democracy in Liberia.

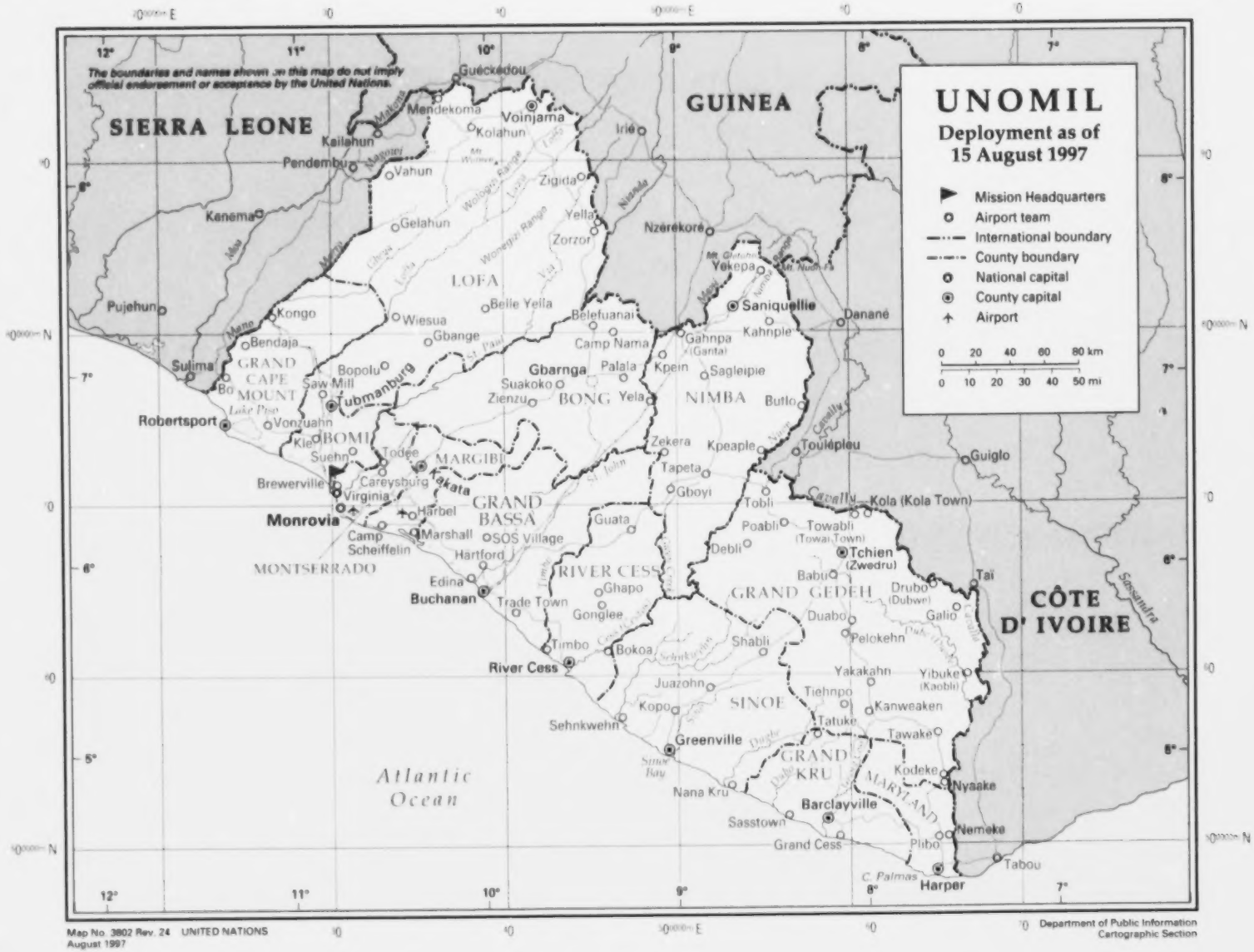
Annex

Composition of the military component of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia as at 15 August 1997

	Military observers	Others[a]	Total
Bangladesh	2	4	6
China	3	-	3
Czech Republic	3	-	3
Egypt	4	-	4
India	3	-	3
Kenya	5	-	5
Malaysia	-	-	-
Nepal	1	-	1
Pakistan	9[b]	-	9
Uruguay	-	-	-
Total	30	4	34

[a] Medical staff.

[b] Including the Chief Military Observer.



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